

Good Morning (or Afternoon)!

- Please grab your binder and open up your power point packet to page 41 and respond to Bell Ringer below.
- **Bell Ringer:**
 - **What do you know about the Vietnam War? How do you think it factors in to the Cold War?**

The 1960s

Lecture 3: The Vietnam War

Vietnam – The Early Years

- The “decade of change” saw Americans deeply divided over the Vietnam War.
- Vietnam had once been a French colony in Indochina.
- In 1954, Vietnamese nationalists, led by **Ho Chi Minh**, defeated their French rulers.
- **Geneva Conference**
 - At the Geneva Conference that followed, Vietnam was divided into two states:
 - North: controlled by Ho Chi Minh and the Communists.
 - South: established a pro-Western state supported by the U.S.



Vietnam – The Early Years

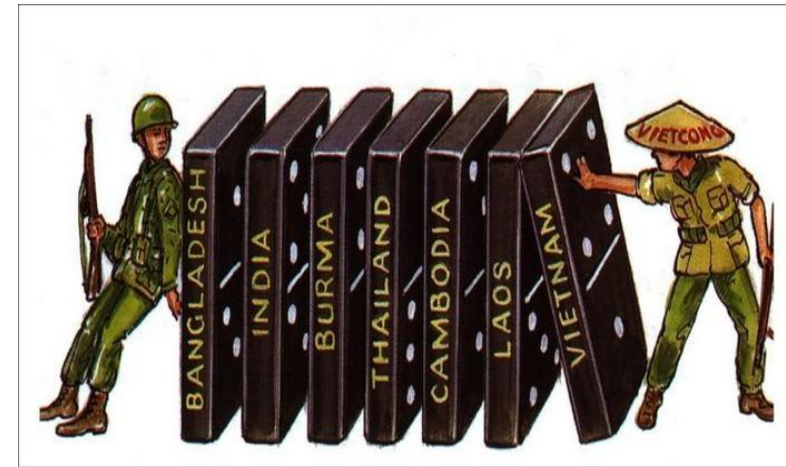
- After the Geneva Conference, the U.S. replaced France as South Vietnam's principal supporter.
- After 1954, Ho Chi Minh introduced land reform, "re-education," and other policies in the North similar to those of Mao in China.
- South Vietnam refused to hold elections for the re-unification of Vietnam, since they feared elections in the North would not be free.
- Soon afterwards, South Vietnamese Communists (***Vietcong***) with North Vietnamese support began a guerilla war against the government of South Vietnam.
- They assassinated S. Vietnamese officials and seized control of S. Vietnamese villages.
- At the same time, S. Vietnam was far from a democracy – its president was a dictator who was opposed by Vietnam's Buddhists.
- In 1963, he was overthrown and murdered in a coup.

Domino Theory

- President Eisenhower had suggested that the fall of French Indochina might create a *domino effect*.
- According to this **Domino Theory**, if South Vietnam fell to Communism, neighboring Southeast Asian countries would also fall to Communism like a row of dominos.
- After taking Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, Communists would threaten Thailand to the west and the Strait of Malacca to the south.
- Resisting the Communists in Vietnam might prevent this collapse.

The War Under President Kennedy (1960-1963)

- The Domino Theory greatly affected President Kennedy's thinking.
- Responding to requests from the S. Vietnamese government for help, Kennedy sent aid and U.S. military advisers to assist S. Vietnam in fighting the Vietcong.
- Kennedy also felt that a successful democracy in South Korea might serve as a model for other developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.



The War Under President Johnson (1963-1968)

- Under President Johnson, the U.S. became even more deeply involved in Vietnam.
- **Gulf of Tonkin Resolution**
 - In 1964, LBJ announced that the North Vietnamese had attacked U.S. ships in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin.
 - Congress voted to give Johnson full military powers to stop North Vietnam's aggression.
 - Years later, it was revealed that the U.S. ships had actually been in North Vietnamese waters in cooperation with South Vietnamese warships that were bombing North Vietnam.
 - Although Congress had not officially declared war, President Johnson used the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution to escalate the war, and ordered massive bombing raids over North Vietnam, and sent more combat troops to South Vietnam.
 - By 1968, half a million U.S. soldiers were stationed in South Vietnam.

New Weaponry

- **Napalm:** a sticky, highly flammable gasoline-based jelly that burns at 3,000 was used to inflicted great damage on the Vietnamese.
- **Agent Orange:** a chemical defoliant cleared the jungle cover used by the Vietcong to hide.



The Tet Offensive

- In 1968, the Vietcong launched a massive offensive throughout S. Vietnam, seizing many major cities, including the capital city of Saigon.
- Once in control, the Vietcong committed brutal acts of terror against S. Vietnamese officials.
- Although American forces finally drove the Vietcong from these strongholds, the offensive marked a turning point in the war.
- It demonstrated to the American public that victory was far away.
- In addition, it disproved the rhetoric of the American government that the Vietcong were weak, under-supplied, disorganized, and low in morale.

Roy Benavidez

- In May 1968, **Roy Benavidez**, facing constant enemy fire, carried wounded members of his platoon to rescue-helicopters.
- He was critically wounded, but he refused to stop gathering survivors, saving the lives of eight men.
- At first, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his heroism.
- When the full story of his daring became known, Benavidez was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor by President Ronald Reagan in 1981.



Increasing Difficulties in Vietnam

- By the end of 1968, the U.S. had dropped more bombs on Vietnam than it had in all of WWII, and the war was costing \$25 billion a year.
- Despite these efforts, the U.S. was unable to win the war for a number of reasons:
 - Popularity of the Nationalist Cause
 - The N. Vietnamese and many S. Vietnamese saw Ho Chi Minh as the “father” of their country.
 - They felt they were fighting for their independence and were willing to suffer large losses to re-unify their country.
 - On the other hand, the disruptions of the war weakened the government of S. Vietnam, and corruption became widespread.
 - Successive S. Vietnamese governments failed to gain popular support.
 - After 1967, S. Vietnam was ruled by a military dictator.

Increasing Difficulties in Vietnam

- Difficulties of Guerilla Warfare
 - Most American soldiers were unfamiliar with the Vietnamese language, people or physical environment.
 - American forces were unable to tell who was friendly and who was the enemy.
 - The jungles of Vietnam provided an ideal cover for **guerilla warfare** (*surprise attacks and sabotage rather than open warfare*) and secret enemy movements.
 - Vietnam's location made it easy for Communists to send a steady flow of supplies through neighboring countries.
- The Anti-War Movement

Growing Discontent: The Anti-War Movement

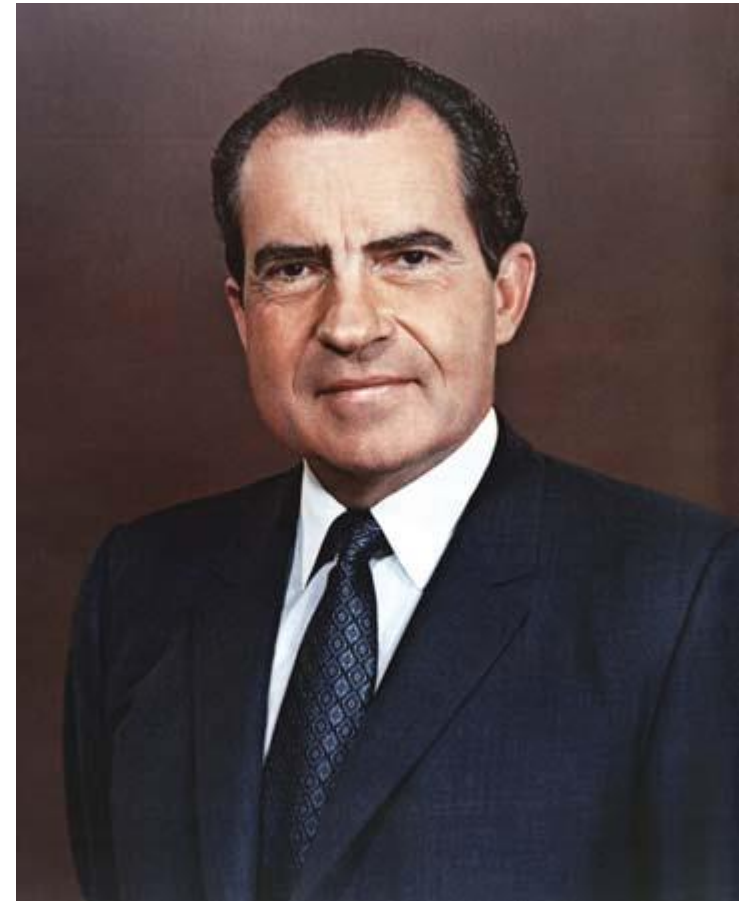
- The **media** (*newspapers, radio and television*) had a great influence in shaping public opinion.
- The Vietnam War was the first time American audiences could watch the destructiveness of the war on their television sets while sitting at home.
- LBJ told Americans they were winning the war, but journalists reported otherwise.
- This created a **credibility gap** (*lack of trust or believability*) – many Americans lost faith in their government's reliability.

Growing Discontent: The Anti-War Movement

- Nowhere was the discontent more evident than among young Americans, who objected to the country's involvement in Vietnam.
- Mass anti-war movements occurred throughout the country from 1965 onwards.
- Young people burned their draft cards, marched on the Pentagon, held rallies, and staged demonstrations.
- By 1968, millions of young people were actively protesting the war.
- The Anti-War Movement greatly influenced U.S. military policy.
- Doves v. Hawks
 - American "doves" wanted the U.S. to withdraw, since they saw the contest as a civil war between the N. Vietnamese and S. Vietnamese.
 - They believed American leaders were acting immorally by bombing civilians and burning villages.
 - The "hawks" supported the war, which they saw as an attempt to defend free Vietnamese from Communist oppression.

The War Under President Nixon (1969-1973)

- Division among Democrats over the war, the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy (younger brother of JFK), and violence at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968 led to the election of Republican Richard Nixon as President.
- During the campaign, Nixon, a staunch anti-Communist, promised Americans “peace with honor” in Vietnam, but the war dragged on for five more years.



The War Under President Nixon (1969-1973)

- During these years, Nixon, aided by **Henry Kissinger** (*a special assistant for national security affairs*), adopted a complex approach in Vietnam:
 - Vietnamization
 - Under Nixon's **Vietnamization** policy, the army of S. Vietnam gradually took over the brunt of the fighting, allowing the withdrawal of U.S. forces.
 - At the same time, Nixon increased American bombing of N. Vietnam and provided military aid to S. Vietnam.
 - Invasion of Cambodia
 - Nixon believed the war would be shortened if supply routes through Cambodia from North and South Vietnam could be cut.
 - In 1970, American troops invaded and bombed Cambodia.
 - Diplomacy
 - Nixon negotiated with Vietnam's Communist allies, China and the Soviet Union, to put pressure on N. Vietnam.

The Fall of Saigon: The End of the War

- After President Nixon introduced Vietnamization, American forces were gradually reduced.
- In 1973, U.S. negotiators in Paris, led by Henry Kissinger, worked out a cease-fire agreement with the N. Vietnamese.
- Nixon agreed to pull out all remaining U.S. troops from Vietnam and N. Vietnam agreed to release American prisoners of war, but after the U.S. withdrew, the fighting still continued.
- **Fall of Saigon**
 - By 1975, what remained of the S. Vietnamese Army was incapable of preventing the advance of the N. Vietnamese.
 - In April 1975, Saigon (today Ho Chi Minh City) finally fell to N. Vietnamese forces.
 - This marked an end to the Vietnam War.
 - S. Vietnamese government officials, military officers, and soldiers who had supported the American presence in Vietnam were sent to Communist *re-education camps*, where they faced torture, disease and malnutrition.

The Legacy of the Vietnam War

- Death and Destruction
 - Over 58,000 Americans died, and many others suffered physical and psychological injuries.
 - Over a million Vietnamese were killed, while many more were left homeless.
- Impact of the War on the U.S. and Abroad
 - Wartime expenses led to the failure of LBJ's Great Society programs and brought rising inflation.
 - The war demonstrated that government actions can be greatly affected by public opinion.
 - It also led to a crisis of American self-confidence.
 - Next to the Civil War, the Vietnam War was the most diverse war in U.S. history.
 - As a result, Americans became more aware of the limits of U.S. power and cautious about where they should act abroad.
- Limits on Presidential Power (War Powers Resolution)
 - In both Korea and Vietnam, Presidents had sent American troops into extended combat without first obtaining a declaration of war from Congress.
 - In 1973, Congress attempted to re-claim its constitutional powers by passing over Nixon's veto, the **War Powers Resolution**.
 - This set limits on Presidential power in a conflict without a formal declaration of war by Congress.
 - The act requires the president to inform Congress within 48 hours of sending troops to fight overseas.
 - If within 60 days Congress does not approve of the use of these overseas forces, the President must withdraw them.